

**Department of State**

**[Public Notice]**

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2017 Youth Ambassadors Program**

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** ECA-ECAPEC-17-032

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 19.415

**Application Deadline:** May 29, 2017

**Program Description/Executive Summary:** The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the FY 2017 Youth Ambassadors Program. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to administer a program that will recruit and select youth and adult participants, provide the participants with three-week exchanges focused on civic education, community service, and youth leadership development, and support follow-on programs in their home communities. The Youth Ambassadors program directly supports the U.S. foreign policy goal of youth empowerment and development by equipping exchange participants with the knowledge and skills to become active and responsible members of their communities. The program will build mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect through shared culture and values, empower participants to be actively engaged in addressing issues of concern in their schools and communities upon their return home; and foster relationships among youth from different ethnic, religious, and national groups. Exchange delegations will travel to the United States from Canada, Haiti, 10 South American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela), eight Central American countries (Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama), and six countries in the Caribbean (the Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago); U.S. exchange delegations will travel to select countries. The Bureau anticipates that the single award recipient will manage the comprehensive organizational and administrative responsibilities of this program, and will identify qualified sub-award recipients to implement programming for at least 60 percent of the exchange participants (approximately 253 participants). The award recipient can implement up to 40 percent of program participants, and the primary award programming should contain a mix of both U.S. and foreign participants. The award will provide funding for approximately 422 exchange participants (322 foreign and 100 U.S.)

**A. Program Description:**

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of

friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

***Purpose:***

The Youth Ambassadors Program provides participants with a comprehensive survey of civic education, community service, and youth leadership development, building their knowledge and skill levels in these areas and supporting them as they become active and responsible members of their communities. The program includes a three-week exchange for high school youth (ages 15-18 at the start of the program) and adult educators focused on these themes and on subthemes such as social inclusion, entrepreneurship, innovation, and environmental protection. Participants engage in a variety of activities such as workshops on leadership and service, community site visits related to the program themes and subthemes, interactive training, presentations, visits to high schools, local cultural activities, homestays, civic education programming in Washington, D.C., or the capital city of the partner country, and other activities designed to achieve the program's stated goals. Multiple opportunities for participants to interact meaningfully with their host country peers will be included. Follow-on activities with the participants are an integral part of the program, as the students apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired by planning service programs in their home communities.

The FY 2017 Youth Ambassadors Program will include the following countries: Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the United States. Countries may vary from this list depending on State Department foreign policy priorities. Pending the availability of funds, it is anticipated that foreign participants will travel from all of these countries to the United States, and that American participants will travel to select countries (see below).

The program goals are to:

- 1) Promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other citizens in the Western Hemisphere.
- 2) Prepare youth leaders to become responsible citizens and contributing members of their communities.
- 3) Influence future leaders by providing them a better understanding of the U.S. systems, culture, and government.
- 4) Foster relationships among youth from different ethnic, racial, religious, and national groups and create hemispheric networks of youth leaders, both within the participating countries and internationally.

The program objectives are for participants to:

- 1) Demonstrate a better understanding of the elements of a participatory democracy in action.
- 2) Deepen critical thinking and leadership skills.
- 3) Develop program planning and implementation skills.

The primary program themes are:

- 1) Civic Education (Citizen Participation, Grassroots Democracy and Rule of Law);
- 2) Community Service; and
- 3) Youth Leadership Development.

For each exchange, applicant organizations must focus on these primary themes. Subthemes, such as entrepreneurship, innovation, social inclusion, and environmental protection will serve to illustrate the more abstract concepts of the primary themes. For example, the subtheme of environmental protection can be used to examine how a group of individuals demonstrate leadership and service by initiating a recycling campaign in their community, or an entrepreneurship subtheme could be used to demonstrate how businesses improve their communities. The subtheme should be integrated into most aspects of the program, including workshops, presentations and community service.

Using these goals, objectives, and themes, applicant organizations should identify their own specific and measurable outputs and outcomes based on the program specifications provided in this solicitation.

#### **Program Options:**

Total funding for the program is approximately \$3,300,000. ECA anticipates awarding one cooperative agreement for the management of the FY 2017 Youth Ambassadors Program. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal program configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. In addition, ECA reserves the right to adjust the participating countries should conditions change in partner countries or if other countries are identified as Department priorities.

Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. See C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements for further information. ECA urges applicants to consider in which countries they exhibit the strongest organizational capacity and to demonstrate that capacity in their proposal. ECA also urges applicants to explain how they will identify, monitor, and provide oversight of sub-award recipients. The applicant's capacity to conduct exchanges and administer sub-awards must be thoroughly described in the proposal. ECA encourages applicants to be creative and flexible in making arrangements that will help meet our program goals. The proposal must outline how the organization will provide exchanges for all countries in this NOFO, and specify which will be conducted by the primary organization and which will be administered through sub-award recipients.

Applicants should address how to send a large delegation representing multiple countries to the United States at one time and must propose a plan to break them into smaller cohorts for most of the exchange activities. This will ensure that all participants actively take part in the exchange and that program staff can adequately monitor the safety and

well-being of the participants. Applicants are encouraged to hold the welcome and closing orientations with the entire delegation.

U.S. applicants are required to have in-country capacity or partner organizations for all countries listed below except for Brazil, where the U.S. embassy will be responsible for participant recruitment. Applicants should expect to work closely with in-country partners and embassies to ensure the program meets State Department goals.

Total Participant numbers: Overall the program will provide for exchanges between countries throughout the Western Hemisphere region for a total of approximately 422 participants (322 foreign exchange participants and 100 U.S. exchange participants).

There will be a number of exchanges, some of them reciprocal. Exchanges should be divided into either single country or multi-country programs. They should be broken down as described below.

### **Single Country Programs:**

#### **Brazil and the United States**

This is one reciprocal exchange for English-speaking participants from Brazil and the United States.

Approximately 37 Brazilians (35 youth and 2 adults) will travel to the United States, and 20 U.S. participants will travel to Brazil. The U.S. Embassy in Brasilia will serve as the in-country partner and the programming will be done in English. The Embassy will manage Brazilian participant recruitment and selection, cover Brazilian participants' in-country expenses, arrange and purchase their international travel, oversee their follow-on activities, and administer the Brazil-based exchange activities for the U.S. participants. The award recipient will be responsible for organizing and funding the U.S.-based exchange activities for the Brazilian participants. The award recipient will also be responsible for U.S. participant recruitment and selection, covering U.S. participants' pre-departure expenses, including international travel, paying for all program expenses in Brazil for U.S. participants, and managing U.S. participants' follow-on activities. The exchange to the United States will take place in January 2018, and the exchange to Brazil will take place in summer 2018.

#### **Canada**

This is one exchange program conducted in English for Canadian citizens with a subtheme of social inclusion. Approximately 15 participants will travel to the United States. Recruitment must focus on new Canadians (first generation Canadians and Canadians born outside Canada), and members of the First Nations, and marginalized populations.

#### **Haiti**

This is one exchange program conducted in French for Haitian citizens. Approximately 15 participants from Haiti will travel to the United States. Participants will not need

English skills to participate and applicants should propose programming in French and provide for interpretation.

**Regional/Multi-Country Programs:**

**Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the United States**

These are reciprocal exchanges in English for participants from select countries and the United States. Participants from nine South American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela) will travel to the United States and U.S. participants will travel to select countries.

Approximately 15 participants from each South American country listed above will travel to the United States (approximately 135 in total); approximately 50 U.S. participants will travel to at least two or more select countries within this group: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Applicants should only propose sending U.S. participants to countries where they or their sub-award recipients can provide the most comprehensive programming for them. Exchanges can be grouped according to organizational capacity, but the award recipients should also be flexible in designing programs based on State Department guidance.

**Central America and the Dominican Republic**

These are three exchanges for seven Central American countries and the Dominican Republic. Participants from Central America and the Dominican Republic will travel to the United States and U.S. participants will travel to select countries in the region. Approximately 10 participants from each country (Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama), 80 total, will travel to the United States. The award recipient should be prepared to conduct the program in either English or Spanish based on State Department guidance.

Proposals should include two reciprocal exchanges for approximately 15 U.S. participants each (30 total) to travel to at least two of the eligible countries (Belize, Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua). Applicants should only propose sending U.S. participants to countries where they can provide the most comprehensive programming for them. American participants going to predominantly Spanish-speaking countries should have intermediate conversational Spanish skills.

**Caribbean**

This is one exchange conducted in English for approximately 40 participants selected from the Caribbean (the Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago and other smaller Caribbean countries served by Embassy Bridgetown listed below).

For this program, the U.S. embassies in the participating countries may serve as the in-country partners and may recruit and select the participants. Proposals should note the applicant's willingness to work with the Program Office and participating U.S. embassies

to finalize proposed country groupings and dates for the exchanges once an award is made. The award recipient must detail how they plan to coordinate in-country costs related to recruitment, selection, and pre-departure orientation. The award recipient must work closely with the embassies to ensure that they have the support required to screen and interview the participants, and manage the budgets for the selection process and pre-departure orientation.

Please note that Embassy Bridgetown (Barbados) serves several eastern Caribbean countries and the participants Embassy Bridgetown selects may come from any of the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and/or St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

**Participants:**

Both the American and international youth and adult participants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- 1) Be citizens of the country from which they are applying (dual U.S. citizens are not eligible);
- 2) Be selected through a merit-based competition;
- 3) Represent the diversity of their home country; and
- 4) Demonstrate an interest in the partner country and the program themes.

Criteria for selection of the participants will include leadership skills, an interest in service to the community, strong academic and social skills, openness, and flexibility. To reach beyond the elite, participants should be recruited from underserved or disadvantaged populations of youth in these countries, including public high schools. Geographic, socio-economic, and ethnic diversity is important, including outreach to indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. It is desirable that participants be clustered by community to facilitate future collaboration upon their return to their home country.

The youth participants must be high school students aged 15 to 18 years old at the start of the exchange, with at least one semester of high school remaining. The adult participants may be teachers, trainers, school administrators, and/or community leaders who work with youth. They will have the role of chaperone, exchange participant, and post-exchange mentor. The ratio of youth to adults should be approximately 10:1, depending on the size of the exchange delegation. Preference should be given to individuals who have not previously traveled to the exchange country, especially on a U.S. government-sponsored program.

For the programs that will be conducted in English, the participants must have sufficient English language proficiency to participate fully in interactions with their host families and their peers and in all educational activities. Programs conducted in Spanish or in French do not require English-speaking participants. For the U.S.-based activities that will be conducted in Spanish or French, the award recipient must provide interpretation and must place participants who speak no English with host families where at least one member speaks Spanish or French. Spanish language ability is required for the American

participants traveling to the Spanish-language program countries. Portuguese is not required for the U.S. participants traveling to Brazil.

### **Organizational Capacity:**

Applicant organizations must demonstrate their capacity for conducting international youth exchanges, focusing on three areas of competency: (1) provision of programs that address the goals, objectives, and themes outlined in this document; (2) age-appropriate programming for youth as evidenced according to the review criteria on “institutional capacity;” and (3) previous experience working on programs in the Western Hemisphere region. Applicants must demonstrate their capacity to manage a complex, multi-phase program with several separate exchange programs.

Applicants applying for this award must demonstrate their organizational capacity in the administration and oversight of international youth exchange programs, leadership programming, and related cultural activities and youth leadership training.

In addition to their U.S. presence, applicants must have the organizational capacity in the relevant countries through their own offices or through a sub-award recipient to recruit and select participants for the program, to provide follow-on activities, and to organize a content-rich program for the U.S. participants, if specified. The importance of a viable, experienced in-country partner cannot be over-emphasized and details of this capacity should be addressed as reflected in the review criteria number E.4. Institutional Capacity. Applicants should consult with their sub-award recipients and in-country partners and involve them in the proposal preparation. Before submitting a proposal, applicants are encouraged to consult with Public Affairs Sections in U.S. embassies concerning the selection and reliability of in-country partner organizations. Please e-mail ECA Program Officer Cynthia Day (DayCJ@state.gov) for embassy contact information.

### **U.S. Embassy Involvement:**

It is important that the proposal narrative clearly state the applicant's commitment to consult closely with the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. embassy in the host country to develop plans for program implementation, including recruitment, selection and orientation of participants, publicity events, and follow-on activities, once a cooperative agreement is awarded. In countries where there is a reciprocal component involving U.S. citizen minors, the award recipient will work closely with the U.S. embassy to provide oversight and monitoring; the U.S. Embassy will concur on housing arrangements, including host family locations (regions, neighborhoods); represent the U.S. Government while the exchange activities are taking place in the host country; and assist program staff and participants in the event of an emergency. At the same time, the cooperative agreement requires that the award recipient solicit input on Embassy priorities and be able to manage the program in the host country in its entirety, with little reliance on embassy staff for administration. For the Brazil region and the Caribbean region, the U.S. embassies will serve as the in-country partners. ECA reserves the right to change the in-country partner in Brazil and the Caribbean region based on the needs of the program.

**Guidelines:**

It is anticipated that the cooperative agreement will begin on or about August 1, 2017 and end on or about March 31, 2021. The award will cover all aspects of the programming in South America, Central America, the Caribbean, Haiti, Canada and the United States – participant recruitment, selection, orientation, three weeks of exchange activities, and support of follow-on activities. Planning and preparation will start in 2017, and the exchanges will take place at various points throughout 2018. Applicants should propose the period of the exchange(s) in their proposals, but the exact timing of the program may be altered through the mutual agreement of the U.S. Department of State and the award recipient.

The award recipient's responsibilities include:

Administration of Sub-Award Programming: The award recipient will conduct up to 40 percent of the exchanges and propose sub-award recipients that will carry out at a minimum 60 percent of the exchange programming (approximately 253 participants). The award recipient will administer and oversee programming conducted by the sub-award recipients to ensure consistent branding and programming for all Youth Ambassadors exchange programs. The award recipient will ensure sub-award recipients are fulfilling all the tasks and meeting targets for programming in close cooperation with U.S. embassies in the program countries. The award recipient will manage all sub-award recipients, both programmatically and financially, to ensure the programming is robust and rigorous, aligns with U.S. foreign policy goals, and is consistently of high quality and programmatically in line with the primary award recipient's programming and Embassy priorities.

Recruitment and Selection: The award recipient will manage the recruitment and merit-based selection of international youth and adult participants in cooperation with the Public Affairs Sections of the U.S. embassies in the participating countries; [Please note these exceptions: in Brazil and the Caribbean, the U.S. embassies will manage the recruitment and selection of foreign participants.] Collaboration with Binational Centers (BNCs) is suggested, where possible. Once a cooperative agreement is awarded, the primary award recipient must consult with the Public Affairs Section at the applicable U.S. embassy to review a participant recruitment and selection plan and to determine the degree of embassy involvement in the process. As applicable, the Public Affairs Section/Award Recipient/Sub-award Recipient must strive for regional, socio-economic, and ethnic/racial diversity, as well as gender balance. For reciprocal programs sending U.S. participants to Central and South America, the award recipient must manage the recruitment and conduct a national merit-based competition to select U.S. participants. The award recipient and sub-award recipients are encouraged to publically advertise the call for applications and recruit diverse participants from the United States for programs in Central and South America. The Department of State and/or its overseas representatives will have final approval of all selected delegations.



Orientations: The award recipient will provide orientations for exchange participants and for those participating from the host communities, including host families.

Logistics: The award recipient will manage all logistical arrangements, including passport and visa applications, international and domestic travel, ground transportation, accommodations, interpretation, group meals, and disbursement of stipends. The award recipient will issue DS-2019s in a timely manner to ensure sufficient lead time in scheduling visa interviews.

Exchange Activities: The award recipient will design and plan three weeks of exchange activities that provide a creative and substantive program that develops both the youth and the adult participants' knowledge and skill base in civic education, community service, and youth leadership development. The activities will showcase diversity, which should be defined broadly to include geographic, urban/rural, ethnic, racial, socio-economic, sexual orientation, political, and religious diversity. The exchanges will take place in the capital city (Washington, D.C. or the capital of the host country) and in one or two other communities. The exchanges will focus primarily on interactive activities, practical experiences, and other hands-on opportunities that provide a substantive program on the specified program themes. Some activities should be school and/or community-based, and the programs will involve as much sustained interaction with peers of the host country as possible (for both the youth and adult participants). Cultural, social, and recreational activities will balance the schedule.

Accommodations: The award recipient will arrange homestays for the participants in the United States with properly screened and briefed American families for the majority of the exchange period. Criminal background checks must be conducted for members of host families (and others living in the home) who are 18 years or older. In the partner countries, homestays are strongly desired whenever feasible in properly screened and briefed South American and Central American families. Please see the Program Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) for details on the host family screening requirements.

Monitoring: The award recipient will develop and implement a plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being while on the exchange and to create opportunities for participants to share potential issues and resolve them promptly. The award recipient must provide proper staff supervision and facilitation to ensure that the teenagers have safe and pedagogically-rich programs. Staff, along with the adult participants, will assist the youth with cultural adjustments, provide societal context to enhance learning, and counsel students as needed. For the safety and security of both foreign and American participants, applicants must comply with the monitoring and supervision requirements, as well as the host family screening requirements, outlined in the POGI.

Follow-on Activities and In-Country Programming: The award recipient will plan and implement activities in the participants' home countries by facilitating continued engagement among the participants and alumni, advising and supporting them in the implementation of community service programs, and offering opportunities to reinforce

the ideas, values and skills learned during the Department of State exchange. Participants should return home from the exchange prepared to conduct programs that serve a need in their schools or communities. To amplify program impact, proposals should present creative and effective ways to address the program themes, for both program participants and their peers. Follow-on activities could include a plan for staff to travel to the partner countries to supplement the in-country partners' work in conducting additional training and facilitating the development and delivery of the participants' follow-on programs.

Evaluation: The award recipient will design and implement an evaluation plan that assesses the short- and medium-term program impact on the participants and on host and home communities.

Website and Branding: The award recipient will create and manage a webpage that will serve as a center point to connect the Youth Ambassadors programs and create more effective and consistent branding of the program.

Alumni Network: The award recipient will establish a network of alumni and conduct follow-on activities which will include previous participants to establish a cohesive group for networking that spans the entire Western Hemisphere region. The proposal should clearly state how this will be accomplished and what web platform or social media will be used to ensure alumni networking will be active and robust as outlined in the review criteria number 5 (section E.1) later in this document.

**Please note:**

In a cooperative agreement, the U.S. Department of State is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The Department's activities and responsibilities for the Youth Ambassadors Program are as follows:

- 1) Provide advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
- 2) Facilitate interaction within the U.S. Department of State, to include ECA, the regional bureaus, and overseas posts.
- 3) Arrange meetings with U.S. Department of State officials in Washington, D.C. and the partner countries.
- 4) Approve final candidate selection and alternates.
- 5) Approve applications, publicity materials, and final calendar of exchange activities.
- 6) Approve housing arrangements, including the host families in all programs.
- 7) Monitor and evaluate the program, through regular communication with the award recipient and possibly one or more site visits.
- 8) Review the award recipient's and sub-award recipients' program design, program plans/schedules and host community arrangements.
- 9) Perform an annual performance evaluation/review.
- 10) Evaluate performance of sub-award recipients and suggest changes to sub-award arrangement as necessary.

**Additional Information:**

The award recipient will retain the name “Youth Ambassadors Program” to identify the program. All materials, publicity, and correspondence related to the program will acknowledge this as a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. ECA will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program as it sees fit.

The award recipient must inform the ECA Program Officer of its progress at each stage of the program’s implementation in a timely fashion, and it must obtain approval of any significant program changes before their implementation.

Proposals must demonstrate how the applicant will meet the stated objectives. The proposal narrative should provide detailed information on the major program activities, and applicants should explain and justify their programmatic choices. Programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations for the International Visitor and Government Visitor category. Please be sure to refer to the complete Solicitation Package – this NOFO, the POGI, and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) – for further information.

**B. Federal Award Information:**

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement

ECA’s level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description above.

Fiscal Year Funds: \$3,300,000, pending the availability of funds.

Approximate Total Funding: \$3,300,000, pending the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: \$3,300,000, pending the availability of funds.

Floor of Award Range: None

Ceiling of Award Range: \$3,300,000, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Award Date: August 1, 2017, pending the availability of funds.

Anticipated Program Completion Date: March 31, 2021.

Additional Information:

Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for one additional consecutive fiscal year before openly competing it again.

**C. Eligibility Information:**

**C.1. Eligible applicants:** Applications may be submitted by U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

**C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds:** There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

### **C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:**

a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount of **\$3,300,000** to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years' experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) Technical Eligibility: All proposals must comply with the following or they will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

- Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

### **D. Application and Submission Information:**

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

#### **D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package:**

Please contact the Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division, ECA/PE/C/PY/T, SA-5, 202-632-9352, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, Cynthia Day, DayCJ@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

It also contains the Program Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition.

Please specify Program Officer Cynthia Day and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

**D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:**

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

D.2a. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3p. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3a. You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

D.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document and the Program Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3c. All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost

associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts. Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

D.3d. You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

D.3e. In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one-page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

D.3f. If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

D.3g. **All ECA awards recipient organizations** must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing [www.GrantSolutions.gov](http://www.GrantSolutions.gov). To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM Washington, D.C. time, Monday – Friday and can be reached at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov) or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

### **D.3h. Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa**

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the official program sponsor of the exchange program covered by this NOFO, and an employee of the Bureau will be the "Responsible Officer" for the program under the terms of 22 CFR 62, which covers the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program (J visa program). Under the terms of 22 CFR 62, organizations receiving awards (either a grant or cooperative agreement) under this NOFO will be third parties "cooperating with or assisting the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program." The actions of recipient organizations shall be "imputed to the sponsor in evaluating the sponsor's compliance with" 22 CFR 62. Therefore, the Bureau expects that any organization receiving an award under this competition will render all assistance necessary to enable the Bureau to fully comply with 22 CFR 62 et seq.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by recipient organizations and program participants to all regulations governing the J visa program status. Therefore, proposals should explicitly state in writing that the applicant is prepared to assist the Bureau in meeting all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62. If your organization has experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor, the applicant should discuss their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et. seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The award recipient will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:  
Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division  
U.S. Department of State  
SA-44, Suite 668  
301 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

### **D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines**

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. 'Diversity' should be interpreted in the

broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

#### **D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation**

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the program's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original program objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your program's objectives, your anticipated program outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your program objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of program activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a program is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.



We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, such as concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

**Please note:** Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

**D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component:** ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage program collaboration and widen participation in the overall program to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our [International Exchange Alumni](#) space. Virtual

exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a program by program basis.

**D.3l. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients:** All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

D.3m. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

D.3n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

D.3o. Allowable costs for the program are outlined in the POGI. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: Monday, May 29, 2017

Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the “Find” portion of the system.

**PLEASE NOTE:** ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov.

Please follow the instructions available in the ‘Get Started’ portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

**It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.**

D.3q. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

## **E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Affairs Section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final

funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

### **E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA**

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

**1. Quality of the program idea:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.

**2. Ability to achieve program objectives:** Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program guidelines described in this solicitation. Proposals should include plans for administering and managing the overall program, as well as working with sub-award recipients to carry out programs as outlined in the POGI. The responsibilities, capacity, and expertise of proposed sub-award recipients should be clearly delineated.

**3. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.

**4. Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or program's goals. The personnel, expertise, experience, and institutional resources of the applicant and each proposed sub-award recipient should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements). The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

**5. Follow-on Activities:** Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) ensuring that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.

**6. Program Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the program's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original program objectives. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each program component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

**7. Cost-effectiveness and Cost-Sharing:** The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

## **F. Federal Award Administration Information**

### **F.1. Award Notices:**

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

### **F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements:**

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov) website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/>  
<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

**F.3. Reporting Requirements:** You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

*Mandatory:*

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: [http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=20&menu\\_id=68](http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68). The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the

Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov). The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [GrantSolutions.gov](http://www.dpm.psc.gov/), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 3.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: [FFATAECA@state.gov](mailto:FFATAECA@state.gov). This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.3j. "Program Monitoring and Evaluation" information.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

#### **F.4. Program Data Requirements:**

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

#### **G. Agency Contacts**

For questions about this announcement, contact: Cynthia Day, U.S. Department of State, Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division, SA-5, Third Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, 202-632-9352, [DayCJ@state.gov](mailto:DayCJ@state.gov).

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

## **H. Other Information:**

### **Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F3. Reporting Requirements.

Mark Taplin  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

March 30, 2017